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THE OPERATIONS OF THE 1ST BATTALION, 358TH INFANTRY  
(90TH INFANTRY DIVISION) AT FORT KOENIGSMACHER,  
NORTH OF THIONVILLE, FRANCE. 9-11-November 1944  
(RHINELAND CAMPAIGN)

(Personal experience of a Heavy Weapons  
Company Executive Officer)

Type of Operation described:  
BATTALION IN A RIVER CROSSING AND ASSAULT OF A FORTIFIED AREA

Captain Harry W. Barnes, Infantry  
ADVANCED INFANTRY OFFICERS CLASS NO 2

*Revised*

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INTRODUCTION

This monograph covers the operations of the 1st Battalion, 358th Infantry, 90th U. S. Division in the assault and capture of Fort Koenigsmacher, one of the forts of the outer defenses of Metz, north of Thionville, France. The battalion was commanded by Lieutenant Colonel C. A. Lytle.

As a matter of introduction I would like to go back to Utah Beach on the Chearbourg peninsula. It was at 10 o'clock in the morning on D-Day that the first elements of the 90th U.S. Division placed their feet on French soil. It was here that the epic of the 90th will begin to unravel itself, until we reach the action covered by this monograph.(1)

The path ran as follows: (Map A) FORET DE MONT CASTRE, PERIERS and then the breakout of the Chearbourg peninsula. The action following was the mad dash across France, passing through AVRANCHES, MAYENNE, LE MANS and then north to ALENCON and CHAMBOIS to the part in the Falaise pocket episode. After this comparative brief diversion, the division then resumed its dash across France, in conjunction with Patton's Armor, as a part of the XX Corps (2)

This path followed the course of CHARTRES, FONTAINBLEAU, REIMS and then THIONVILLE. (Map A) The Germans at this point, in the 90th Division sector were forced across the Moselle. It was at this point, generally along the west bank of the Moselle, that the 90th Division was ordered to halt and assume the attitude of aggressive defense. The date was 12 September 1944.

(1) E, p.5; (2) Personal knowledge.

This condition was caused to exist because of the extended supply lines created by General Patton's Third Army pursuit across France. (3) Another reason for the halt was the factor of Fortress Metz to the south of Thionville in the 5th Infantry Division sector. (4)

After this thrust across France, the Germans in the Third U.S. Army sector, had moved back to a strong defensive position which extended from Luxembourg, in the north, to the foothills of the Vosges mountains, in the south. The strongly fortified city of Metz was in the center of this defensive works. Metz had a strong ring of 43 intercommunicating forts for its defense, as well as the high hills that cradled the Moselle. (5)

The Germans had reached a line at which they chose to fight. The stronghold of Metz was to be held at all cost. The XX Corps' Mission, however, was to reduce the Metz fortifications and capture the city. Something was going to have to give. (6)

The assault of the fortifications and the city could not begin immediately due to the critical situation existing with supplies. XX Corps had dangerously stretched its supply lines from the time of the breakout of Normandy to this time. (7)

As supplies were building up an effort was made to reduce Fort Driant and Fort Verdun and strike Metz from the south. This was begun on 7 September. The attempt on Fort Driant and Fort Verdun failed; however, a bridgehead in the vicinity of Dornat was held to keep their attention, while another crossing was made at Arnaville, 4,000 yards to the south. This operation was successful and the 5th Division and the 7th Armored (3) A, p.3; (4) A, p.1; (5) C, p.93; (6) B, p.12; (7) A, p.1.

Division had succeeded in reaching a point on the Seille River, and out-flanked several of the Metz positions.(8) (Map B)

By 10 October the American Third Army front formed an obtuse angle, the sides extending along the Moselle, north to the Luxembourg border and south to Chateau Salins with Metz occupying the apex.(9) (Map B)

#### THE FORTIFIED REGION OF METZ

As can now be seen, the big job in front of XX Corps was the reduction of Metz and its outlying forts. This would have to be done before XX Corps could accomplish any further missions to the east and to the Saar River.

A brief word as to the strength of the fortified area is as follows; It consisted of an inner ring of forts, of which there are 15 in number. These were begun back in the 18th Century and completed in 1866 under Napoleon III. They, however, had been reconditioned, reinforced and equipped for modern warfare. The outer ring of forts, 28 in number, were located out about 6 miles from the city of Metz, in all directions, in which Metz was the hub.(10) In conjunction with this group of forts, of the Metz group, was a series of forts of the Meginot line further to the north. These included Fort Koenigsmacher and Dillange. These seemed to tie in perfectly with the over all plan for the defense of Metz.(11)

#### THE PLAN OF THE THIRD ARMY

The sole mission of the Third Army in the XX Corps sector was, not that of taking the city of Metz alone, but in conjunction with the over-all effort of expelling the Germans from French soil and hurling them back to the Rhine.(12)

(8) A,p.4; (9) C,p.93; (10) A,p.6; (11) A,p9; (12) C,p.94.

The best plan was to execute a pincer movement from the north and south, to close somewhere in the rear of the city. The right, or south wing was in very favorable positions to execute their portion of the plan. They occupied a dominant position with fine observation. The left, or north, wing had quite a different situation facing it. It would have to force a crossing of an obstacle, the Moselle, establish a bridgehead and expand it before the necessary support equipment could be crossed.(13) This being the situation, there would, of necessity, have to be a different time schedule set for each wing of the pincer. The south wing would move out initially on a broad front while the north wing made local actions, which would be exploited. The south would then hold up while the north wing would initiate an aggressive offensive.(14)

#### THE XX CORPS PLAN

The XX Corps plan for the carrying out of its portion of the Third Army plan is well pictured in Field Order #12, Hq XX Corps, APO 340, U.S. Army- portions of which "I quote"

F O 12 (Map B)

2. XX Corps atks on D-Day, to encircle and destroy the garrison of METZ fortified area, and to seize brhd over the Saar R. vic SAARBURG. To reconnoiter in force and seize crossings over the Saar R. intact. Prepare to resume atk to the NE.

D-Day: to be announced

Formation, bdries and obj opns overlay

3.a.5 Inf Div

(1) On Corps O, atk to seize high ground (overlay) mak-

(13) C, p.94; (14) C, p.95.

ing main effort on rt (S/fl) (overlay)

(2) Within Z block all routes of withdrawal from METZ and prevent any en reinf of the METZ garrison.

(3) Establish and maintain contact with 90 Inf Div and XII Corps.

(4) Protect brhd over MOSELLE R. with minimum force, coordinating with 95 Inf Div for use of one Mtz bn of that div for br protection purposes, on Corps O.

b. 95 Inf Div

(1) On Corps O, relieve elms of 10 Armd Div containing en brhd W of MOSELLE R.

(2) In coordination with 90 Inf Div make vigorous demonstration of crossing MOSELLE R. Via UCKANGE commencing at 1500 hours on D-Day and continuing for a minimum of fifteen hours. Trs will cross the MOSELLE R during this demonstration. Demonstration will build up and not be permitted to taper off until time of cessation.

(3) In conjunction with demonstration via UCKANGE reduce en pocket E of MAIZIERES to the MOSELLE R both efforts to be so coordinated as to create the indication of a major atk.

(4) Vigorously contain en within Z. Maintain constant pressure on en, and rapidly follow up any en withdrawal.

(5) On Corps O atk and seize the city of METZ.

(6) Be prepared on Corps O to assist 5 Inf Div in protection of brs over MOSELLE R with one Inf bn, mtz from 95 Inf Div

c. 90 Inf Div

(1) Under cover of darkness, nt of D/D + 1 pass through T.F. Polk and cross MOSELLE R in vic of KOENIGSMACHER (overlay), coordinating with 95 Inf Div demonstration via UCKANGE.



(2) Seize high ground (overlay) making main effort on left (E) flank

(3) On Corps O pass 10 Armd Div, 83 Inf Div (1 Rot), and 3 Cav Gp (Reinf), (in O listed) through brhd over MOSELLE R.

(4) Within Z prevent en withdrawal from METZ area, and in conjunction with 10 Armd Div prevent en reinf of METZ garrison.

(5) Establish and maintain con with 5 Inf Div, 10 Armd Div and 83 Inf Div.

d. 10 Armd Div (initially less Div Arty)

(1) upon relief in Z containing en brhd, by 95 Inf Div, move to initial assembly area vic of MARS-la-TOUR (overlay). Displace to forward assembly area (to be designated), on Corps O.

(2) On Corps O atk through 90 Inf Div brhd to seize high ground (overlay), making a main effort on Left (E) fl.

(3) (a) Upon passage through 90 Inf Div brhd, reconnoiter to Saar R with one C Comd, to seize intact, crossings over R, from MERZIG to the S.

Priorities of reconnaissance:

1. MERZIG area

2. PACHTEN-DILLENGEN area

3. SAARLAUTERN area

(b) Any bridges seized intact will be protected and held at all costs.

(4) Prevent en reinf of METZ garrison from the E or NE, and in conjunction with 90 Inf Div prevent en withdrawal from METZ.

(5) Establish and maintain con with 90 Inf Div, 83 Inf Div

and elms of XII Corps.

(6) Protect E fl of Corps

e. 83 Inf Div

(1)

f. XX Corps Arty

(1) (a) 5 FA Gp

Gen support Z 90 Inf Div initially reinf 10 Armd Div  
when div crosses MOSELLE R.

(b) 40 FA Gp

Reinf 90 Inf Div

(c) 195 FA Gp

Gen support Z 90 Inf Div and 10 Armd Div

(d)

(e)

(f) 10 Armd Div Arty

Gen support Z 90 Inf Div under Corps control initially,  
revert to 10 Armd Div control prior to Div crossing  
MOSELLE R.

(g) 4 TD Gp

Gen support Z 90 Inf Div

g. XX Corps Engrs

(1) (a) 1139 Engr C. Gp direct support R crossing and  
assault opns 90 Inf Div, 10 Armd Div and 83 Inf Div

h. 3 Cav Gp (T.F. Polk)

(1) Contain en in Z, securing LD 90 Inf Div

"end Quote"(15)

(15) A, p.62.

## THE ENEMY SITUATION

There were four divisions opposing the XX Corps disposed as follows: 416 Infantry Division opposite the north flank of the 90th Division, held the sector from Koenigsmacher to the north boundary of XX Corps, 19th Grenadier Division opposite the southern portion of the 90th Division sector and northern portion of the 95th Infantry Division sector, held from Koenigsmacher to within 5 miles of Metz, 462 V.G. Division manning the forts in the immediate Metz area along with some O.C.S fanatics from Metz. To the south was the 17th S.S. Panzer Grenadier Division, in the 5th Division sector. Other General Headquarters units, numbering about 2,000 men were scattered throughout the area.(16) (Map B)

The 416th Infantry Division had about 8,300 men, 19th Infantry Division had about 5,000 troops, the 462 V.G. Division, officer candidate personnel and special troops numbered about 9,000 men and the 17th S.S. Panzer Grenadier Division had about 6,000 men. All total they numbered about 30,000 troops.(17)

On 1 November XIII S.S. Corps in the Metz defensive sector was replaced by LXXXII (82nd) Infantry Corps, commanded by Generaleutnant HOENNLEIN. Generaleutnant KITTEL, an expert in fortress defense was brought from the eastern front to take command of the 462nd V.G. Division. He did not arrive until XX Corps had already breached the defense shell.(18)

In the area of operation of the 1st Battalion, 358th Infantry was the 1st Battalion, 74th Infantry Regiment, 19th Infantry Division. This force was about 500 strength. This was numerically larger in quantity than the attacking force. The quality was definitely not of the same caliber. (19)

(16) A,p.14; (17) A,p.14; (18) A,p.15; (19) A,p.56.

## THE DIVISION PLAN

The 90th Division was to make the main effort on the north, in this pincer plan to reduce Fortress Metz. In accordance with the XX Corps plan the 90th Division initiated a series of plans and actions. The 95th Infantry Division quietly relieved the 90th Infantry Division from its portion of the holding area around the Metz salient. The 90th moved with utmost secrecy to the AUDUN-AU METZ-MORFONTAIN-MEREYLE BAS quadrilateral, this being accomplished during dates 31 October- 2 November. This move ostensibly for training. Training was actually initiated, but the division was faced with the knowledge that the date of the operation could be the 6th of November and not later than the 9th, had scant time for the necessities in planning and training.(20)

From Thionville northeast to the German boundary the MOSELLE river flows swiftly along its winding course traversing a comparatively broad riverland. The river itself under normal conditions has an average width of from 300 to 350 feet, with moderately abrupt to gently sloping banks. The ground adjacent to the river is predominantly marshy and during wet periods subject to shooting. This latter condition while posing no restriction to assault boat crossing, definitely limited the development of bridge sites to those points where civilian bridges had previously existed and thus telegraphed our plan for floating bridge construction to the enemy once the crossing had been initiated. Some 2 Kms north of the river a large wooded expanse, the FORET de CATTENOM, containing an adequate road net, provided an excellent divisional assembly area, its sole disadvantage lay in the fact that its forward slope location necessitated the entry (20) D,p.1.

therein to the hours of darkness. Between the forest and the river the ground was smooth and devoid of cover and completely under observation from the high ground across the river, more than that it was enfiladed by enemy positions on the bald knob LE STROMBERG, west of the Moselle and just outside the Corps left boundary.(21)

Analysis of the terrain north of the river had a definite influence on the development of the plan and the execution of the preliminaries thereto. If secrecy was to be preserved the 90th Division would have to stage into the FORET de CATTENOM at night and at the latest possible time. Coincident with the foregoing a thickening of the cavalry along the river was indicated to make completely effective the counter-reconnaissance screen which previously had been unable to completely thwart German patrol penetrations. Of even greater importance however, was the obvious requirement for a limited attack by other forces to drive the Germans from his west bank positions in the BASSE KONTZ-LE STROMBERG area prior to the crossing, thereby protecting the assault troops from the flat observation which threatened the success of the assault. The completely open nature of the terrain from the south edge of the assembly area to the river made mandatory the utmost of silence to permit the establishment of the initial bridgehead prior to dawn.(22)

Across the river the enemy held terrain was most formidable. For a depth of 1 to 2 Kms the ground possessed characteristics similar to the flats adjacent to the near bank and then sloped abruptly to the ridges running perpendicular to the riverline. (21) D,p.3; (22) D,p.3.

*not to be used*

In the right of the division sector, on a hill apart, stood the GROUPE FORTIFIE de KOENIGSMACHER a METZ type fortress which commanded the entire crossing area. True, it could be by-passed by leading elements, but upon its speedy neutralization and reduction depended the success of the maneuver. This was a task of tremendous proportions. Squarely down the middle of the division zone ran a heavily wooded, rugged ridge which contained the main fortifications of the MAGINOT LINE. While constructed primarily to resist attack from the east, study of the fortifications immediately disclosed that in conformity with universal defense doctrine the defensive areas had been designed for all around and mutual support, and consequently, if properly manned would present a serious obstacle, regardless of the direction of assault. The initial problem was the METRICH GROUP, the northernmost of the strong points that commanded the river line as superbly as did the KOENIGSMACHER fortifications. Further to the east the heights were even more commanding, although not known to possess man-made fortifications. Still eastward, outside the division zone of action, lay the highest ground of all. Four axial roads lay within the division zone traversing the valleys between the parallel ridges and providing at first glance, adequate communications, but study soon indicated that their usefulness was seriously limited by their geographical location since they would be commanded for considerable distances in rear of front lines by enemy held side slope positions. (23)

It was<sup>a</sup> requisite that the assault not only be initiated under cover of darkness but also that the leading elements, disregarding the known limitations on night attacks, drive forward (23) D.p4.

and secure by daylight, a toehold on the foothills to deny to the enemy close observation of the crossing area. A railway and highway closely paralleling the river provided initial phase lines, but beyond this point depended on the individual soldier and the control of his leader. However desirable an encircling maneuver might be on the right flank, the commanding position of the GROUP FORTIFIE DE KOENIGSMACHER dictated a frontal assault upon this stronghold. With bridging operations definitely limited by terrain obstacles to the CATTENOM and GRAVISSE bridgesites, initiation of bridging operations was entirely dependent upon the removal of the enemy's close observation. And so from the start it was realized by all ranks that ultimate success lay in the hands of the infantrymans ability and courage to attack prepared fortifications, manned by an alert foe.(24)

The division plan of attack was simple and sound and thoroughly prepared. To develop the maximum strength at the earliest practicable moment, the assault was to be made with two regiments, each with two battalions abreast. Three general crossing areas were possible, astride the town of RETTEL, GRAVISSE-MALLING and CATTENOM respectfully. The RETTEL area was disregarded because of its proximity to the dominating ground along the German border east of the attack zone, ground to which no troops could be diverted. Consequently, the left regiment was earmarked to cross in the GRAVISSE-MALLING area and drive rapidly east and southeast to secure the high ground parallel to the east of the RETTEL-KERLING road. The right regiment crossing in the vicinity of CATTENOM, was to capture KOENIGSMACHER FORTRESS with minimum force, simultaneously pushing the assault (24) D, p.4.

to secure a logement on the high ground on the right of the division sector. Since the town of KOENIGSMACHER, along the river, was squarely in the middle of the division zone, its inclusion within the objective of either assault regiment would necessitate a divergent effort by that regiment which would only serve to detract from the strength of their respective main effort. As a result KOENIGSMACHER and the ground immediately adjacent thereto was boxed off as a "No maneuver" area and turned over to the division artillery to neutralize until such time as the third regiment could mop up. The third regiment initially held in reserve, was to cross behind either of the assault regiments at the earliest possible moment and swing into action down the MAGINOT LINE ridge to complete and solidify the bridgehead. A corps engineer battalion was to support each of the assault regiments and subsequently provide the necessary bridging while the divisional engineer battalion was kept intact for assault operations with the infantry and general engineer work on the far shore. 90th Reconnaissance Troop, reinforced, was to mop up on the right of the division zone and eventually link up with the secondary crossing of the 95th Division in the UCKANGE area. The divisional artillery, greatly reinforced, had a number of tremendous tasks. In consonance with the desire to maintain secrecy to the latest possible moment, no preparation was contemplated, although the battalions were prepared to deliver planned fires on call prior to H-Hour and to counterbattery effective counter preparation fires. At H-Hour a heavy program of destruction fires was to be laid on the KOENIGSMACHER and METRICH fortifications and on the close-in towns of BASSE-HAM, HAUTE HAM, KOENIGSMACHER, METRICH, MALLING and HUNTING. (25)



This is the broad outline, the plan for the establishment of the bridgehead. It incorporated the recommendations of the unit commanders and division staff and in final form voiced the best considered thoughts of the division in matters both tactical and technical after consideration of all angles. This plan was communicated via conference to commanders and staff down to and including battalions on the 3rd of November, it became the point of departure for the preparation and implementation of unit plans.(26)

#### THE DIVISION PREPARATION

With the closing of the 90th Division in its rear assembly area on 3 November began a period of intense activity.(27)

Reconnaissance of the area of future operations was energetically pushed within the limitations made necessary by security considerations. Artillery positions, engineer equipment parks, infantry assembly areas, routes of approach to the river, crossing zones, and the road net were all reconnoitered and/or chosen by small officer parties who moved as inconspicuously as possible without divisional insignia on their clothing and in vehicles of the 3rd Cavalry Group. This sketchy reconnaissance was not at all desirable but it was felt that the preservation of secrecy regarding the contemplated operations of the 90th Division and its point of impact outweighed the advantages accruing from a more detailed survey of the attack zone. The supporting engineer battalions, upon designation by Corps, were wedded with the 358th and 359th Infantry Regiments, chosen as the right and left assault regiments respectively.

Training in basic assault boat technique from the infantry standpoint was given to each soldier since battle casualties (26) D,p.5; (27) D,p.6.

during the preceding 5 months had out to a mere handful those former members of the 90th who had had ample experience in river crossing operations. Simultaneously, infantry staff and commanders planned to the last detail the composition of the boat waves and individual boat loadings, this included the 357th Infantry which although earmarked to cross by footbridges or rafts was non-the-less prepared for the eventuality of an assault crossing. When the regiments departed from the rear assembly area, each individual soldier knew his wave and boat number and his chief of party. Further, supply echelons prepared an operational plan and organization designed to maintain, and provide evacuation for their regiments by assault boat and motor boat if vehicular ferries or bridges failed.(28)

The supporting arms and services were equally busy. The Corps Engineer plan was modified where necessary and integrated with that of the 90th Division. Steps were taken to stage forward additional equipment reserves, DUKWS and accessory supplies to meet unforeseen contingencies. The problems of signal communication were given careful consideration. In addition to a double tactical net, an engineer and a traffic control net were organized and linked laterally. The laying of wire to and within the forward assembly area was carried out under cover of darkness for several nights prior to the target date. Weighted cable was prepared beforehand to permit bridging of the river gaps away from projected bridges. Realizing the unusual demands which would be placed on radio until such time adequate bridging could be provided, stacks of batteries were accumulated. At the divisional level, supply agencies were

(28)D,p.6.

prepared for the movement of necessities considerably further forward than normal to allow unit echelons to concentrate their efforts forward of regimental dumps.(29)

The 90th's crossing was phased to follow by one day a great air strike designed to neutralize the major Metz forts and other critical areas in the attack zone, provided that air strike came by the 8th of November (inclusive), in any event, the assault was to take place by the 9th. The 5th and 6th of November were days of heavy rain, thereby granting 48 valuable hours for continuation of preparation. At divisional headquarters, loose ends were gradually tied together and with regimental plans firm, the field order was issued at 2200 hours 6 November.(30)

Movement to forward assembly areas was complicated by the great number of units involved, both division and corps(all of whom had to move at night), coupled with the inadequate and poor road net. The march table, after close coordination with corps, was based on the movement of the division on the nights of D- 3/2 and D- 2/1. As it developed the successive postponement of D-Day permitted the scheduling of the move over a period of three nights.

The artillery displacing on the nights of 5-6 and 6-7 November was completely positioned by daylight 7 November. This move, accomplished without benefit of moon and under incessant rain on slippery, narrow roads. The remainder of the division displaced on the night of 7-8 November, a move of even greater difficulty. The distance involved being too great for marching, the displacement was made by marching and shuttling and involved two round trips for the attached transport-  
(29) D,p.6; (30) D,p.7.

tation. By dawn 8 November, the division and all supporting elements had closed within the protective cover of FORET De CATTENOM and the defilade area to the immediate rearward thereof.(31)

7 November had been a dark and rainy day and the target date was definitely set for 9 November. And so, 8 November the initiation date for the XII Corps offensive to the south became a day of final preparation and coordination for tomorrow's assault. Artillery battalions registered skillfully with but one gun per battalion, prepared their final data. Communications were extended forward and laterally throughout the division area. Lower echelon commanders made their reconnaissance of routes of approach and crossing areas and surveyed from a distance their far bank objectives. Personnel concerned with traffic circulation and bridge control received final instructions and departed for their post. In the early afternoon all men were briefed on the division mission, its importance to the army scheme and their individual parts in it.(32)

#### THE BATTALION PLAN

The part the 1st Battalion, 358th Infantry was to play in this overall picture of the reduction of fortress Metz, was that of reducing Fort Koenigsmacher. This fort was an important point in the northern portion of the Metz defenses. <sup>part</sup> ~~This fort was one of the Maginot Line group.~~

The 1st Battalion, 358th Infantry was relieved from its present mission of containing a portion of the salient around Metz. It moved back to an area of barracks near Morfontaine, (31) D,p.7; (32) D,p.7.

France, along with the rest of the regiment. Here in this area, from 3 November until 7 November, training was conducted on dry run river crossings, boat loading and methods of paddling in conjunction with the engineers. There, training was conducted on the assault of fortified positions and areas. The old fortifications of the Maginot Line, in that area, were used in conjunction with this training. The battalion was refitted in equipment, all lost or destroyed equipment replaced and all weapons put up to perfect working order. During this period of training, the men, and the larger part of the officers did not know for what specific mission they were being trained. The general conclusion was a river crossing and attack of a fortified position to tie in with the training being taken.

It was not until the last day in this area that maps, aerial photographs and large scale engineer sketches were issued down to all levels, which designated Fort Koenigsmacher as the task before the 1st Battalion, 358th Infantry. This was 7 November. The crossing date had been set for sometime prior to daylight 9 November. This was during the night D / 1 for the overall XX Corps operation.(33)

The regimental plan was to cross the 1st battalion on the right at the town of Basse Ham, over which Fort Koenigsmacher looked, and take that fort by storm. The 3rd Battalion was to cross opposite Koenigsmacher (not to be confused with the fort of the same name). The 2nd Battalion was to remain in reserve, initially, until the town of Koenigsmacher had been taken, then cross and relieve the 3rd Battalion who would contain the town.

(34)

After the regimental plan was known and extensive reconnaissance accomplished, Lt. Col. C. A. Lytle, the then battalion commander, issued this plan.

The battalion would cross in four waves, the first wave being made up of two platoons from each of the two assaulting rifle companies, "A" and "C". The second wave would consist of the company headquarters group of each of the assault companies, the attached engineer unit, the reserve platoons of the two companies and attached heavy machine gun platoon. The third wave was made up entirely of Company "B", along with the battalion command group. The fourth wave was to be composed of Company "D"(-), Headquarters Company and the Medical Detachment.

(35) Each unit, upon reaching the enemy shore, was to have a particular job to do. It was felt by the Battalion Commander, that the town of Basse Ham would have to be taken along with the fort since it could be such a thorn in the side, if by-passed. This would also leave an open right flank for the battalion, as well as the division. The town, in itself, would provide an excellent base from which to operate on the fort.(36) It also provided a perfect set-up for the aid station to care for the wounded, of which there were many, as later proven. It was on the suggestion of Captain McEvoy, the battalion surgeon, that the plan to move the battalion surgeon and aid station across with the fourth wave was incorporated with the original planning. This was done only by the 1st Battalion. It was later proven that this was a very wise move.(37) *Revised*

(35) A,p.54; (36) Personal knowledge; (37) Personal Knowledge.

77 The further plan was to have Company "A" assemble on the railroad tracks. It was a definite feature that could not be by-passed. Company "C" was to turn right upon crossing, and capture Basse Ham prior to daylight. This was to be done by sending one platoon to the south end of town, via the enemy side of the river, and set up a blocking screen. One platoon was to make a sweep down the main street of town from the north, to kill or capture all Germans possible and drive the remainder out the south end of town, where the platoon there would take care of them. Company "B" upon crossing was to join Company "A" on the railroad tracks, here organize and prepare to assault the fort at the break of day.(38) This plan was disseminated to the various commanders for their study and orientation.

The battalion moved, by shuttle from its rear assembly at Marfontaine, beginning in the mid-afternoon of 7 November, to Hayange. At this town a hot meal was served for supper. This was about 1900 in the evening. After this brief halt and nourishment the battalion moved on by shuttle to the rear, west of Cattenom Forest, where the battalion detrucked and moved by foot to previously reconnoitered assembly areas within the forest. This was completed by about 2100. The troops bedded down for the remainder of the night. This was to be the last restful sleep for about the next two weeks.(39)

Throughout the next day, 8 November, a more thorough reconnaissance was made by company commanders. The battalion commander and staff completed the last minute preparations. The boat loads were rechecked, equipment rechecked and all the last minute personal details taken care of.(40)

(38), (39), (40) Personal knowledge.

Arrangements and coordination had been made with the 179 Engineer Battalion, supporting this operation. They were to drop the assault boats at a little village of HUZANGE. There the infantry and engineers would meet and begin the hand-carry of the boats to the river, about 1,500 yards distance. This was later proven to be a mistake, because of the long haul.(41)

*ms. map of region*  
All unit commanders were taken to a vantage point in the edge of Cattenom Forest, which overlooked the entire field of operations. From here could be seen the point at which the boats would be picked up, the area to be traversed enroute to the river, the crossing area, the assembly point along the railroad, the town of Basse Ham and the rising hill mass to the east upon which sat Fort Koenigsmacher.(42) At this point they were thoroughly oriented and all last minute coordination between the battalion and company commanders was made. The unit commanders, in turn, brought all N.C.O.'s down to and including squad leaders, to this same vantage point. At this time the same thorough briefing was given and all questions concerning the operation answered as far as possible. This was truly one of the few times in which the entire battalion knew what it had to do and had seen the area over which the operation was to take place.(43)

About 1700, 8th November, the battalion commander assembled the battalion in a group, in the Cattenom Forest. Here he went over the entire plan, as previously given, very thoroughly, and laid down a standard that he expected every individual to reach in the impending operation. He, being a very forceful and courageous character, instilled in every man the necessity of accomplishing the mission ahead.(44)

(41) Personal knowledge, A,p.55; (42), (43), (44) Personal knowledge.



The companies were released to return to their company areas to get as much rest as possible prior to the departure from the assembly areas. There was not much sleeping that night for thinking of the operation to come was of utmost priority. The departure from the assembly area was scheduled at 0100.(45)

The plan to be followed has been presented and the happenings prior to the actual jump off enumerated. I now wish to describe the terrain and features that the battalion was ~~going~~ to operate over. The Cattenom Forest, in which the battalion had been bivouacked, ranged from 193 to 160 meters in height and was very heavily wooded. This furnished perfect cover for the bivouac.

After leaving the forest to the east and southeast the ground tapered off to a flat of about 150 meters. This extended from the towns GAROHE, KOEKING, HUZANGE and CATTENOM to the near bank of the Moselle as a table top. This area was devoid of cover and afforded little protection. There was no cover for boat assembly points along the river. This was the reason for selecting Huzange as the pick-up point for the boats, thus the long haul to the river bank. The area across the river, on the enemy side, was essentially the same as on the near side, extending as far in as the railroad track.

Just to the southeast and east of Basse Ham, the ground began to rise to form the heights upon which Fort Koenigsmacher rested. This rise was almost abrupt, rising from 150 meters to 210 meters, in the distance of about 400 meters. This ridge-like peak was the dominant feature in the area. From this could be viewed the entire flat area extending over to Cattenom Forest.  
(45) Personal knowledge.

Thionville, approximately 6 miles to the south, as well as all intervening ground could be viewed with ease. The view to the north extended to Metrich. This piece of terrain was not so decisive as was the fort that rested on its crest.(46)

Fort Koenigsmacher was a member of the MAGINOT group that tied in with the Metrich Fort some 4,000 yards to its northeast, on the east of the Moselle River. Some three miles to the southwest was FORT D'ILLANGE, a sister fort of the Maginot group. The three above mentioned forts completely commanded the Moselle basin and the parallel highways extending along either side. In addition to these mentioned the main Maginot belt extended from these positions to the southeast to Boulay. There were some 19 forts in this group. Each fort's artillery tied in with that of the other.(47)

A description of Fort Koenigsmacher is typical of the general layout of the forts of the Maginot line. The fort mounted 4-100 M.M. guns in its top. These were seated in completely revolving turrets of steel of 3 to 4 inches in thickness. The casemates, that had exposed sides, were constructed so as to be covered by machine guns emplaced in adjoining wings with sufficient traverse to interlock with its opposite machine gun. All approaches to the steel doors of the forts were blocked by a complete barrier of spiked steel fence about 7-8 feet in height. This fence was covered by machine gun emplacements. The general shape of the fort was five sided. To the outside of the main fort structure was a series of shelter points numbered from 1 through 8. These consisted of one story concrete pill box projections. Each entrance was protected by a guard room.

(46) Personal knowledge; A,p.3&4; (47) D,p.4.

The corridors inside these shelter points led to a staircase which, in turn, led to the basement floors and underground corridors of the main fort. In the top of the main concrete fort structure was a series of blister-looking affairs that were armored observation posts. These had a series of slits around them from which very safe observation could be had. Artillery fire had no effect on them. To the outside of the shelter points was a complete trench of a depth to permit a man to stand and fire. This completely circled the fort. Within this trench firing stations were dug so that a man did not have to silhouette himself while firing. To the outside of this trench, on the forward slope and extending completely around the hill side, was a barbed wire entanglement of from five to twelve aprons. These were of the permanent type entanglements with the heavier aprons facing the east side of the fort.

These forts were built, originally, as a defense against Germany. In some areas of the entanglements existed moats that were to be filled with water and various obstructions but had not been filled. This, generally, was the main obstacle to be overcome by the battalion.(48)

#### THE ASSAULT

The first wave was scheduled to start its crossing at 0330. To meet this schedule the battalion moved from its assembly area in the Cattenom Forest at 0100. The order of companies was the same order as set up in the planning stages for the various waves. The 1st wave elements leading, 2nd wave and so on.

(48) A,p.56.

The march from the assembly area to Huzange, the boat pick-up point, was about  $2\frac{1}{2}$  miles. At this point the 179th Engineer Battalion had dropped the 40 boats to be used by the 1st Battalion. There were three engineers with each boat load of twelve infantrymen.(49)

Huzange was the last cover to be had. When the troops left this point it was wide open. The first wave picked up their boats and started the 1,500 yard carry to the river bank. The move was to be secret, yet you could hear the muffled curses of the men, as they stumbled along in the pitch blackness with their individual loads of weapons, ammunition and rations, as well as this cumbersome assault boat. The men had to rest at intervals enroute to the river bank. This long haul was a mistake, yet there was no other arrangement to be made and maintain the desired secrecy.(50)

The first wave entered the water at 0330 and crossed without mishap except that the rising river, caused by the excess rain, had carried them some 1000 yards further down stream than contemplated. On previous occupation of Thionville by the 90th Division the river current had been charted but the rising condition had made a difference. This condition of the river had also inundated the prepared positions on the enemy side of the river. They were not manned. It had also permitted the boats floating over mine fields that would have normally been exposed. The river was a friend at this particular time. So far, not a shot had been fired. The second wave had the same good fortune as the first wave. The enemy had not yet discovered the crossing. Everything had gone as clock work to now. Company A had

(49) Personal knowledge; (50) Personal knowledge.

formed on the railroad track, Company C had also organized and was preparing for its assault on BASSE HAM.(51) (Map E)

There was, however, a hitch with the third wave. The engineer having returned from the first and second wave did not wait for the third wave. They, thinking their job had been done, left the boats. It was about an hour before the third wave, manning their own boats, had succeeded in crossing. They reached the the railroad tracks and organized along with Company A. That put Companies A & B assembled and ready to move out for the fort at daybreak. Company C was ready to assault the town. The fourth wave, not having heard from the third wave, sent a five man search party to see what the cross-up was. They found the remainder of the boats, not used by the third wave, unattended. Due to the delay, the fourth wave did not complete its crossing until about 0715. The Germans had, by this time, discovered the crossing and had begun to shell the crossing area. As a result a part of the Mortar Platoon of Company D did not make the crossing and was forced to move back to Cattenom.(52)

In the meantime, A and B Companies, after assembling on the railroad track, moved out in a column of platoons over the open area to the woods that surrounded Fort Koenigsmacher. Here complete reorganization took place. Company A formed up in a skirmish line. Here they waited until the previously designated time for the coordinated assault to arrive. That was 0715.

Company C had reorganized and sent one platoon to the east of Basse Ham, between the town and river, on around to out the road leading southwest out of town and set up a block, to catch (51)Personal knowledge; (52) Personal knowledge & A,p.55.

any Germans that might be driven out that edge of town. At a predesignated time, the remainder of Company C made a night attack of the town, sweeping down the main street of town, clearing the buildings on either side, as they progressed. This was a complete surprise to the Germans within the town. Some were in the houses in bed and had to be awakened upon capture. Only those on guard put up any resistance, which was fierce but momentary. The entire town had been cleared prior to daylight, with the exception of a few snipers located in some outlying buildings to the east of town. These were soon neutralized. This rapid capture of BASSE HAM afforded facilities for the setting up of the Battalion Aid Station, which was making a crossing of the river simultaneous to the attack on the town. There was, evidently, no communication between the forces in the fort and those in the town, for this action had been completed without a response from the fort. (53) (Map E)

At 0715 Companies A and B, from their respective positions, started their assault with two platoons abreast in each company. They charged up the gradual incline, which grew steeper and steeper as they progressed. The assault passed over the barbed wire entanglements and was progressing on toward the system of trenches that surrounded the crest of the hill. The entire action, to this point, had been accomplished without a shot being fired at them. It was not until A Company had come within sight of the trenches that a sentry in an armored observation post fired on Company A and gave the alarm. Company A had reached the trenches and took cover therein. Company B had been stopped just short of the barbed wire.

(53) Personal knowledge.

At the sound of the alarm, 50 M.M. mortar fire began to fall on the positions. The fire could be brought down on the fort with no harm to the occupants, but the attackers on the outside, began to take casualties. This fire had been, previously, zeroed in from positions within the main fort and also from other adjoining forts. By this time, all the troops of the battalion had crossed the river that were going to get across for the rest of the day. Heavy mortar fire, also, began to fall into the town of Basse Ham. The troops were in the cellars and in the buildings, so the fire was ineffective, as far as casualties were concerned. It restricted movement somewhat. It was now about 0900 and Company C had completely cleared the town and had pushed a platoon out the highway to the southwest of town, to occupy those outlying buildings. They were to serve as a flank protection for the battalion, as well as, for the division. This was an open flank, all the way to Thionville, where the 95th Division had elements.(54)

Now, we find the battalion disposed as follows: In Basse Ham, there was Company C protecting the town and the south flank of the division, one platoon of machine guns from Company D was attached. The battalion aid station was in operation in a secure basement at the main intersection of the town. Battalion Headquarters Company and the command group were in operation in the town. Company D was intact, save one section of 81 M.M. mortars, that had been forced back from the crossing site by mortar fire. The mortars that were across were set up in the town to cover the right flank of the battalion. They could not be of value to fire on the fort, itself, in support of the.

(54) Personal knowledge.

infantry. Company A with one platoon of heavy machine guns attached and Company B with attached engineers, were disposed around the west and southwest edges of the fort. (55) (Map E)

From these dispositions, a systematic reduction of the main fort was to take place. The rifle troops were taking a heavy pounding from the mortar fire that was falling on the fort. The observers could observe from the armored observation post, located on top of the fort, and bring the observed fire down, directly on to the position without <sup>being protested</sup> harm to the observer. The job then, was to first, eliminate the observation post. The attack could not move on until this had been done.

This phase of the attack was spearheaded and organized by Lt. Neal and Lt. Patrick from Company A and Lt. Martin, with the attached engineers. Each of the A Company officers lead assault teams assisted by Lt. Martin. Under cover of fire from remaining troops of Company A they would place a seventeen pound charge of, the then new explosive, Composition "O2" at the base of these O.P.'s. This very potent explosive had a devastating effect on these structures, as well as, inhabitants. The western portion of the fort was worked on for the remainder of the day in the same systematic method as above described. The observation post on the west edge of the fort, as well as, the sally and shelter points of this portion of the fort, were neutralized throughout the day. Company A <sup>then assaulted</sup> attacked the fort as an assault and overran about one third of the fort. The Germans would merely withdraw into the inner portions of the fort and call down devastating mortar fire on the attackers. This forced a withdrawal to the cover of the original positions in the

(55) Personal knowledge



trenches. In this murderous hail of mortar fire throughout the day, 40 casualties were assessed. During the day Captain Denning, Company B Commander had been killed. Captain Campbell then a lieutenant, took command of the company. Company B had not made a great deal of progress on the south of the fort. It was ordered to move from its present position, around to the west of the fort, and join Company A, where the greatest progress was being made. This was to be accomplished during the night of 9-10 November. (56) (Map E)

The first day saw the town of Basse Ham fall to Company C. Companies A and B successfully reached the fort and had begun an assault. The technique of blasting the Germans out of their stronghold had been learned. This technique was to be used to great advantage the following day. The aid station that had ~~come across~~ <sup>been set</sup> up in Basse Ham was paying dividends. The casualties, from the first day, were heavy and serious.

The supplies of ammunition, plasma, medicine and food were planned on the assumption that a bridge would soon be installed. The Moselle River was, initially, a help in that its risen condition inundated the enemy positions on the river bank and also permitted the assault waves to float over the normally exposed mines. It was now becoming more of a formidable foe than the Germans. During the day the water had expanded from its normal 300-350 foot width to, from 600-800 feet and by noon had reached widths of 800 yards. The engineers had started their bridging operations, first working in knee deep water, in hip deep and then in waist deep water. Finally, the current became so wicked that bridging operations were ceased completely.

(56) A, p. 48.

Six battalions of infantry were across the river, fighting the enemies' armor and fortified areas with hand carried weapons. The waters continued to rise until the entire flat area, from the railroad tracks on the east side of the Moselle, to the edges of Garche, Koeking and Cattenom on the west side of the river were flooded. (57) (Map E) *not on map*

This was the condition that existed for the division as nightfall came. The battalion was low on ammunition, explosives had been expended, rations ~~had to be had~~ *were needed*, the aid station had to be replenished with plasma and all medical supplies. The wounded, some in serious condition, needed to be evacuated. The tremendous job of re-supply was started, as soon as, nightfall began. This was done by the battalion drivers, company drivers, supply personnel from all companies and any attached engineers available. ~~This~~ *It* was carried out under the direction of Lts. Sharidan and Martin, the battalion motor officer and battalion S-4 respectively on the west shore and Lt. Autrey, S-3 on the east shore. It was a tortuous job in the dark of night with a river on the rampage. The boats would have to be loaded and floated back to the small towns, that the water had reached, pushed through the shallow water until the current became too strong, then try to row and navigate the rest of the way.

Through the untiring efforts of these men left on the supply job, the battalion received supplies that night. Due to the tortuous condition of the river and its swift current, which had overturned several boats, it was decided not to attempt evacuation of wounded that night. They were better off where they were. It was hoped that a bridge would be completed in (57) A, p.20.

the morning. The remainder of the mortar platoon from Company D completed the crossing during the night.(58)

The situation on the following morning, 10 November, was as follows: The assault was to continue on the fort. Company B had moved around and had taken over the left half of what had been Company A's sector, the day before.(Map E) In the town of Basse Ham, the platoon of Company C that had moved out on the extreme southwest end of Basse Ham had been cut off during the night by a German force that had come back into that portion of town. They had occupied the buildings just to the southwest of the small stream, that ran through Basse Ham. This platoon from Company C was in a bad situation for a little while.(59)

Captain Charles Watson, then Lieutenant, the forward observer from Cannon Company, established an observation post in the church steeple, overlooking the houses that the Germans had occupied. His mission was to support the relief of the Company C platoon. With one gun of Cannon Company, he began registering. His O.P. was on line gun-target and at any moment one of his own shells could have clipped his O.P. from under him. With systematic precision, each house, one after the other, was thoroughly obliterated. Upon further investigation dead Germans were found all over. With this, the platoon of Company C was relieved.(60) For the remainder of the day Company C protected Basse Ham.

From positions as now disposed, Companies A and B resumed the assault on the main fort. Company A consolidated and took the right half of what had been their entire zone the day before. When both companies were in position the attack jumped off. By noon of the 10th all of the armored observation posts, on top of (58)Personal knowledge, D,p.13; (59)&(60) Personal knowledge.

the fort, in the zone covered by Company A and B, had been knocked out. (Map E) This was accomplished by the extreme use of "C2". The Germans would withdraw from strong point to strong point as they were knocked out, never failing to render harsh resistance. The hail of mortar fire continued to fall on the attackers, taking its toll. The idea was struck on by Lt. Neal, of A Company, to locate the ventilator shafts of the various underground bunkers systems. This being done, ten gallons of gasoline was dumped down into one of them and a thermite grenade followed. A terrific roar and concussion followed, with screams and moans coming from within. This had definitely done some good. The concussion was so great, that a body was blown from the inner parts of the fort, out through the opened ventilator shaft. This procedure was taken up by the rest of the troops on the fort, along with continued use of great quantities of "C2". There was such a great amount needed on the massive structures of the fort that the supply was soon near the diminishing point. An urgent call was put in for a refreshed supply of explosive to continue the operation before the day was over. This was necessary because, as each strong point would be neutralized, the enemy would move deeper into the fort, into other portions not yet blasted. They would then infiltrate back after the pressure was relieved. The re-supply of the needed explosives, could not be made rapidly enough by the river route, so five liaison planes were dispatched with 500 pounds of explosives. These planes flew down over the battalion positions and dropped their loads. They hit, squarely, in the battalion positions. This was the answer to the "flood bound dog faces" prayer. With this added explosive each company continued the destruction in their particular zones. (61)

Company A had managed to blast its way into some of the bunkers super structure and tunnels. Entrance could not be made further underground, due to the rubble, and complete blackness existing within the tunnels. A plan of the underground structure was not in the possession of the troops, so it would have been very foolish to try to mop up <sup>below</sup> ~~down there~~, when so much good was being done above. This offered protection, however. (62)

During the late evening of the second day the Germans initiated a counterattack, from the northeast corner of the fort, which they still occupied, with a force of approximately 50 men. This assault was repulsed, without loss of ground, with the small arms of the 1st battalion personnel. The enemy suffered about 28 killed in this costly little escapade. The remainder withdrew back into the supposed safety of the fort. At the end of the second day, 10 November, the two rifle companies were displaced on the top of the fort as shown (63) (Map E)

The situation within the division was very critical. The Moselle had still denied a bridge at either the Cattenom or Gravisse-Malling crossing sites. The <sup>River</sup> ~~stream~~ <sup>Switzerland</sup> had gotten to a width of  $1\frac{1}{2}$  miles at various sectors. The supply of the battalion had to be accomplished by the same means as the previous night. All available personnel, not actually involved in holding a position on the fort, <sup>were</sup> put into play, in carrying ~~ev~~ <sup>ev</sup>acuations, ammunition, explosives and medical supplies from the river's edge, to the positions on the fort. The same supply personnel were doing a herculean job of getting them across by boat. Some of the wounded had gotten to such a condition that evacuation was necessary, or else they would die. Those that (62) Personal knowledge; (63) Personal knowledge, A, p. 56

had to be evacuated were tied to litters and transported by boat across the still treacherous Moselle. The others continued to await the completion of a bridge.(64)

On the third day, 11 November, Company C was moved from Basse Ham to the fort. It took up the position occupied by Company B on the 1st day of the assault.

The mortar platoon of Company D and the personnel of Battalion Headquarters Company were given the mission of taking over the responsibility of Company C in the town.

The fort area was divided into three zones (Map E).. After all companies were in position the final all out assault on the fort was to begin. The assault was spearheaded by Company A. The various bunkers, case mates and strong points were reduced by the same expedient as employed the previous two days. Large quantities of gasoline, followed by a thermite or white phosphorous grenade were used. Large quantities of "O2" were also put into play.(65)

Around noon of this day a message was received from Division Headquarters, with the order to withdraw from the fort, since it was such a costly objective in both men and material. The answer was returned by Lt. Neal. "This fort is ours! I could not ask my men to leave here now. They are more determined than I to finish the job." With this the assault was pushed with fresh vigor. The Germans were squeezed and blown into an ever constricting smaller portion of the fort.(66)

At 1600 the remnants of the force holding the fort attempted a mass exit through one of the outlying shelter points in the northeast corner of the fort. They ran smack into a  
(64) & (65) Personal knowledge; (66) E,p.37.

force from Company G that had been left behind by the 2nd Battalion, as flank protection. There were 372 able bodied krauts in the force. All were taken prisoner by Company G and were completely out of fight, after the three day episode just completed.(67)

The 1st Battalion was very put out about not getting to make this catch, after the "hell" experienced in taking the fort. The battalion estimated that it had killed or captured about 500 Germans, (included, is this 372 above mentioned). This was the entire 1st Battalion, 74th Infantry Regiment, 19th Infantry Division.(68)

The casualties in the 1st Battalion were: 21 killed, 85 wounded and 5 missing.(69)

At 1350, 12 November, the battalion passed to Regimental reserve. Company C remained on the fort, Company B outposted the area between the town and the fort and Company A held Basse Ham, covering the right flank of the regiment.(70)

#### ANALYSIS AND CRITICISM

In a study of this operation several factors are outstanding. First of all the operation to be undertaken was very sound in principle and easy to understand. This was true all the way from Third Army down through the Corps' plan, Division plan and lastly, that of the battalion. There were no complicated maneuvers directed on the Corps' level, nor further down on the division level. The plan for a pincer action, from the north and south of Metz, was the only solution to such a strongly fortified area.

The entire operation was dependent upon secrecy, which was (67) Personal knowledge, D,p.15; (68) D,p.15; (69) A,p.56 (70)A,p.56.

maintained and achieved by all levels, until actual contact was made on the enemy side of the Moselle. This was achieved through the movement of units at night, no unusual activities, even though great plans were being drawn up, the maintenance of normal artillery fires and the sealing of patrols, from the assembly areas, occupied by the assaulting troops.

This was one of the few operations in which ample time was given the subordinate commanders to make thorough reconnaissance of future areas of operation. The same applied to the proper orientation and briefing of troops, prior to a jump off.

The point that almost spelled disaster, for the entire operation, was the unforeseen condition that developed with the Moselle River itself. It seemed to wait, as though controlled by the Germans, for the attacking forces to get across on the enemy side and then release its rushing power as an almost unsurmountable obstacle. The over all operation was <sup>hasty</sup> planned, on the hasty construction of a bridge in the division area. This condition was ~~one~~ beyond the control of any one individual. It cannot be laid as criticism against any one person or group of individuals. There could have been some information accrued from the natives of that area, as to conditions that existed with the river, during rainy seasons. This could, on the other hand, have given away the operation.

The entire credit for the success of this operation on the fort, goes to the skill, guts and daring of each individual "dog face". There were absolutely, no support fires of any sort throughout the reduction of the fort.

The one criticism to be voiced is the lack of coordination with the support engineers, that being the 179th Engineer Bat-



talion. It is much more desirable to have support elements that are organic to the unit performing the action. The feeling of esprit de corps and feeling of the ultimate accomplishing of the mission does not exist with strange units attached, only for isolated actions. <sup>IT</sup> ~~Fact~~ is not known as to who was at fault in the instance where the assault boats were left unmanned at the rivers bank on the initial crossing. This could have, very easily, <sup>have</sup> upset the entire operation, had it not been for the action of the people within the crossing unit itself, in ~~the~~ gathering together of the boats and crossing on their own.

The condition that ~~had to~~ <sup>did</sup> exist due to the long haul of the assault boats from Huzange to the river bank was not desired. This haul was too long, and recognized as such, <sup>however</sup> Due to the high priority on secrecy this was necessary, since Huzange was the last covered area, before reaching the crossing site. The men were thoroughly winded upon reaching the launching site and had to regain strength prior to the crossing. An alert enemy could have completely suppressed the crossing.

Later prisoner reports revealed a sense of false security existed with the Germans, due to the condition of the Moselle and the contemplated rise of the river. An assault crossing was certainly not expected at flood stage.

As a conclusive remark I quote the letter of Commendation from Lieutenant General G. S. Patton, Jr. to the Commanding General, 90th Infantry Division.

"The capture and development of your bridgehead over the Moselle River in the vicinity of Koenigsmacher will ever rank as one of the epic river crossings of history."

## LESSONS LEARNED

1. Let every man, down to and including the squad leader, know the situation and what is expected from him and success is much easier to achieve.
2. Allow ample time for reconnaissance for leaders down to basic commanders.
3. Permit training and rehearsal time for units that are going to execute a special operation, such as a river crossing and attack of a fortified position.
4. Expediency must be utilized to the fullest extent, (ie) dropping explosives, medicine and rations by cub plane and the use of gasoline and thermite grenades as explosives.
5. Utilize knowledge of native population to learn conditions that develop with the rivers during rainy seasons.
6. Fortified areas can be taken by storm by assault troop without aid.
7. Surprise is of maximum value.
8. If maximum efficiency is to be ~~gotten~~ from troops they must be supplied with sufficient ammunition, food and protection from the elements.
9. It is often necessary to utilize troops on tasks not particularly trained for. *which they are*
10. Rapid evacuation of wounded is essential.
11. If possibilities of a barrier exist, put necessary installations on troop side of barrier, (ie) Medical Station set up on bridgehead side of river.